

# Restoring Readiness

## Ready Today— Preparing for Tomorrow

*Our readiness concerns include training and maintenance deficiencies, spare parts shortages, a young and inexperienced workforce, personnel recruiting and retention challenges, increasing casualty rates and higher maintenance costs.* Vice Adm. Thomas Collins, USCG

Throughout our history, Coast Guard men and women—active duty, reservists, civilians, and auxiliaries—have performed superbly even as our roles expanded and the tempo of operations increased. Our military, multi-mission, and maritime competencies and our noble commitment to helping others have yielded a highly adaptable and capable service for the American public.

During the last several years, our operations have resulted in an impressive list of accomplishments, including effective response to tragic airline crashes; the development of new counter-drug tactics and capabilities, and corresponding record seizures of cocaine; focused environmental-protection efforts resulting in the continued decline in the number and size of oil spills; massive humanitarian relief operations associated with natural disasters; and positive and effective law-enforcement response to increasing pressures from illegal migrants and fishing. We have also been recognized for leadership and managerial success and have been given highest honors following our implementation of service-wide strategic and performance plans under the guidelines of the Government Performance and Results Act.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the superb performance of Coast Guard men and women, we have serious concerns about our ability to maintain readiness now and in the future. We have continued to meet our growing operational needs by sustaining higher levels of performance and extended hours from our people. These people are working harder and longer to overcome cumulative increases in operational requirements without commensurate increases in supporting resources. Wear and tear on both people and infrastructure has accelerated.

Increasing mission requirements,

chronic underfunding, aging equipment, obsolescent systems, and a culture that has espoused *Semper Paratus* (Always Ready) at any cost have contributed to the Coast Guard's current readiness dilemma and threaten future capabilities. Our readiness concerns include training and maintenance deficiencies, spare-parts shortages, a young and inexperienced workforce, recruiting and retention challenges, increasing equipment casualty rates, and higher maintenance costs. We must take immediate steps to restore service-wide readiness and shape our future to answer increasing mission demands that can be accom-

plished through an aggressive recapitalization program and forward-looking programmatic initiatives.

## Readiness

In 2000, our short-term response to these readiness challenges included a reduction in cutter and aircraft hours to more closely align operations with available resources and support. This was done in large measure to preserve our emergency-response capability. In the longer term, we are striving to modify our culture from one of having to get underway at any cost to one of operating within the limitations of our funding levels. We



Coast Guard crewmembers are an intricate part to maintaining readiness in the future.